

**RESTORATION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)
PROJECT FACT SHEET
SEPTEMBER 1997**

**HNC REVISION: 25 FEBRUARY 1998
TAG REVIEW DATE: 19 MAY 1998**

1. **SITE NAME:** Weepectet Islands-U.S. Navy Bombing Practice Area

SITE NUMBER: D01MA056700

LOCATION:

City: Gosnold
County: Dukes County
State: Massachusetts

PROJECT NUMBER: D01MA056701

CATEGORY: OE

INPR RAC: 4

ASR RAC: 3, with 4 recommended

TAG RAC: 4

2. **POC'S:**

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICT:

Name: Bill Holtham
Office: CENAE-PD-M
Phone: 617-647-8670

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION:

Name: Celia Orgel
Office: CENAD-PP-S
Phone: 212-264-6484

HEADQUARTERS:

Name: J. R. Gibson
Office: CEMP-RF
Phone: 202-761-4709

ASR/INPR TEAM LEADER:

Name: Richard L. Pike
Office: CEHNC-OE-DC
Phone: 256-895-1559

ASR SUPPORT DISTRICT:

Name: Randal Curtis
Office: CEMVS-ED-P
Phone: 314-331-8786

ASR TECHNICAL REVIEWER:

Name: Thomas M. Meekma
Office: SIOAC-ESL
Phone: 815-273-8739

3. **SITE DESCRIPTION:** The former Weepectet Islands-U.S. Navy Bombing Practice Area was a 1,000 yard radius danger zone in Buzzard's Bay, which included the three Weepectet Islands, part of the Elizabeth Islands, comprising the town of Gosnold, Dukes

County, Massachusetts off the southern coast of Massachusetts. The site lies approximately three and a half miles west of Woods Hole and seven miles southwest of Falmouth. Access to the island was gained by flying from New Bedford Airport via Bayside Air Seaplane charter to Cuttyhunk Island. From there, a person previously contacted agreed to ferry the team to the site. The Weepecket Islands are an uninhabited nature preserve of the J.M. Forbes Naushon Island Land Trust. Clamming and fishing occur in the area.

The center of the 1,000 yard radius is a rock, on the middle Weepecket Island, at latitude 41° 31' 06" and longitude 70° 44' 06". The only target in this danger zone, referred to as **Target A** during the war, was a 250 yard radius circle around the middle island at latitude 41° 31' 04" and longitude 70° 44' 08".

This middle island is roughly 200 by 400 feet and comprises approximately 1.8 acres at low tide. It has no soil or vegetation and consists primarily of gravel and stones up to 16 inches in diameter. The center third of the island is five feet above the water surface at high tide and is whitened by gull dung. One particularly large boulder 30 feet in diameter and 15 feet high is the prominent feature of the island and is thought to have been the target center. The islands drain directly into Buzzards Bay. There are no major streams at the site. Flooding could occur from heavy localized rainfall or from tidal flooding. Throughout the islands there are wet spots, ponds and marshes consisting of salt water.

The ocean has a moderating influence on temperature extremes. The average monthly temperature in July is 73.5° F and 29.6° F in January. annual minimum temperature is 43.9° F and the maximum is 59° F. The highest recorded temperature was 102° F in July 1977 and the lowest was -12° F in January 1957.

4. **SITE HISTORY:** During World War II, the U.S. Navy began using Weepecket Islands - U.S. Navy Bombing Practice Area. It served as a practice bombing, rocket and gunnery target area for the First Naval District, particularly Naval Air Station (NAS) Quonset Point and its auxiliaries.

Sometime between September 1941 and December 1943, the Navy acquired a leasehold on the property and the Federal Government established a 1,000 yard radius, danger zone. The language of the lease document is not known. The danger zone centered on a rock, on the middle Weepecket Island, at latitude 41° 31' 06" and longitude 70° 44' 06". Only one target was noted within the danger zone, referred to as Target A during the war. It was a

250 yard radius circle around the middle island at latitude 41° 31' 04" and longitude 70° 44' 08".

Effective 28 December 1957, the Federal Government revoked the danger zone around the Weepecket Islands, ending authorized usage of the range. Since then, the Weepecket Islands have remained an uninhabited nature preserve of the J.M. Forbes Naushon Island Land Trust.

5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Size, Acres:	1.80 (acreage of middle island)
Former Use:	Bombing target
Present Use:	Undeveloped
Probable End Use:	Undeveloped
Ordnance Presence:	Confirmed:
Type:	Bomb, miniature, practice, AN-MK23; rocket, 2.25-inch, practice

6. CURRENT STATUS: The draft Archives Search Report (ASR) for Weepecket Islands-U.S. Navy Bombing Practice Area was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District, in September 1997.

7. STRATEGY: RAC 4;EE/CA

8. ISSUES AND CONCERNS: The Huntsville Center Technical Advisory Group reviewed this ASR and determined RAC 4, EE/CA for the middle Weepecket Island based on ASR findings: (1) Accounts attested that the site was used for practice bombing, gunnery (firing of machine guns) and rocket firing, (2) The ASR site inspection team found practice bomb and rocket debris on the higher elevations of the middle island, which was the only designated target area at the site, (3) The site inspection team found no signs of OE on the northern and southern islands, and (4) They found no direct evidence which would indicate that HE items were used. The hazard from parachute flares was deleted from this project because the Archives Search Report indicated that these items were dropped on nearby Naushon Island, causing fires. A revised RAC Form, RAC 4 is attached (A value for rockets is not included because practice rockets, not explosive, were used). The research team did not find any historical documentation specifying the types or quantities of ordnance at this range. NOFA would apply to all areas within the danger zone other than the middle island.

HNC Safety Comments: Concurred with the recommendations of the ASR team for a strategy of EE/CA, RAC 3 and that RAC 4 might be more appropriate for this site. He also points out that the RAC sheet was modified without authorization to include practice

rockets with a value of 6. The RAC form only has an actual value for explosive rockets of 10.

CWM: The archive search did not locate any documentation relating to CWM activities at the Weepecket Islands - U.S. Navy Bombing Practice Area, Massachusetts. There was no information available on the storage, use or disposal of chemical warfare materials at the islands.

Natural Resources: Federally and State threatened species do not occur within the site area. However, there is a heron rookery on the southern end of the island. An on-site inspection by appropriate State and Federal personnel may still be necessary to verify the presence, absence or location of listed species, or natural communities.

Historical Resources: The ASR did not indicate if historical/cultural resources were found to be present at the site. Any intrusive measures taken within the area will require oversight by the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or other like organizations.

9. SCHEDULE SUMMARY: EE/CA

10. FUNDING/BUDGET SUMMARY: For Official Use Only